



MEET ME IN THE BIBLE

THE STORY OF JACOB

AN 8-WEEK BIBLE STUDY

COLLEEN D. SEARCY

Foreword by Jen Wilkin

“Simple and straightforward, Meet Me in the Bible is a wonderful resource to gain foundational skills in studying the Bible. If you want to feel confident in mining Scripture for God’s truths and applying it to your life, this is an incredible guide.”

Laura Wifler, Cofounder, Risen Motherhood; coauthor, *Risen Motherhood: Gospel Hope for Everyday Moments*

“I was greeted by the bright smile of Colleen Searcy over thirty years ago when I walked into a youth group in West Texas as a freckle-faced, curly headed, unbelieving teenager. Over the last three decades, I have watched Colleen cling to God’s word, teach God’s word, sing God’s word, and live God’s word. If you are looking to *meet* God in the Scriptures, I can think of no better guide than my friend Colleen. She will help you taste and see that the Lord is good!”

Shane Barnard, singer-songwriter, Shane and Shane

“Colleen Searcy is one of my favorite Bible teachers. You will sense her open-armed ministry within the framework of her Meet Me in the Bible series, in which she’s thoughtfully prepared a table for women to feast on God’s word. Whether you are an individual hungry to know God more, a small group desiring an accessible way to study together, or a women’s ministry leader looking for a foundational resource for your teaching team, the Meet Me in the Bible series is a trustworthy guide.”

Caroline Saunders, author, *Come Home: Tracing God’s Promise of Home through Scripture*

“I’ve benefited from Colleen’s wisdom, teaching, and partnership in ministry for a number of years. She is a gifted Bible teacher who uses her skills to invite others into biblical literacy. In the Meet Me in the Bible series, she provides what few studies do—an opportunity for women to gather for both in-person teaching and discussion. You will be equipped to not only study for yourself but also cultivate teaching gifts in the lives of the women in your church. I can’t wait to recommend this to my ministry friends.”

Courtney Reissig, author, *Teach Me to Feel: Worshiping through the Psalms in Every Season of Life*

“As the CEO of a worldwide mission agency, I highly recommend Colleen Searcy’s Meet Me in the Bible series for anyone interested in going deeper in their study of the Bible. Colleen uses a structured approach with guiding prompts that are fully interactive and enhance your reflection on Scripture. These books are helpful resources for pursuing individual study or leading a Bible study group, and these studies are culturally relevant for all groups of people. Meet Me in the Bible is an excellent and well-rounded framework that can make studying the Bible a more engaging and enriching experience for anyone.”

Kurt Nelson, CEO, East-West Ministries

“I have seen firsthand the fruit of Meet Me in the Bible. Colleen’s accessible framework for studying the Scripture has had a large and lasting impact on our church. Many in our congregation are still reaping the benefits of her investment in our women’s ministry. If you are a seasoned student of the Scripture or are just getting started, Meet Me in the Bible will launch you into a greater exploration of the Bible and a deeper enjoyment of the God it reveals.”

JR Vassar, Lead Pastor, Church at the Cross, Grapevine, Texas; author,
Glory Hunger

THE STORY OF JACOB

Meet Me in the Bible Studies

Colossians and Philemon

The Stories of Women

The Story of Abraham

The Story of Jacob

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FOREWORD

For the past twenty-five years, my primary place of ministry has been the local church, and my primary aim has been to build Bible literacy among women. So, naturally, any time I'm asked to endorse a resource, I ask myself how it will serve that context. That's why I'm particularly excited to bring to your attention the Meet Me in the Bible series.

When evaluating a resource, I hold two important questions in view: (1) Is this from a trustworthy voice? and (2) Does this challenge those who use it to grow in their ability to read and understand the Scriptures? I want to help answer both of those questions for you as you consider how the Meet Me in the Bible series might help you personally, or those you serve in your church.

In terms of the trustworthiness of the author, I can speak with confidence that Colleen Searcy is an excellent guide. I first met Colleen in 2008, about a year after moving to Dallas and joining a new church. I was looking for other women in the church who shared my desire to see women equipped with solid discipleship opportunities. Colleen and I went to coffee, and I knew I had found a like-minded partner. Since that time, we have together taught, written curriculum, led teams, and prayed—all from that desire to see God's daughters grounded in the Scriptures. Colleen is not only theologically and biblically solid; she is a gifted teacher, humble and kind, and a faithful friend.

In terms of the usefulness of the resource, Meet Me in the Bible so closely aligns with my own philosophy of teaching that I can recommend it eagerly. It's a brilliant combination of a Scripture journal and a guide for growing in Bible literacy. It encourages the user to practice the time-tested method of "observe, interpret, apply" in a way that allows understanding to grow gradually. It presses us to be active learners rather than passive consumers, not rushing to commentaries, but sitting with the text, patiently waiting for our own understanding to begin to emerge. For those who know my method and Bible studies, Meet Me in the Bible will feel familiar in the best ways.

It is a streamlined approach suitable for personal study as well as an excellent foundation for group discussion and teaching environments.

The skills taught in each Meet Me in the Bible study will help you understand a particular book of the Bible better. But they will also help you understand *any* book of the Bible better as you grow in your ability to use those skills. And because application focuses on relationship—with God, self, and others—these skills will help you to live and love like a Christ follower.

So it is my pleasure to commend to you both a trusted guide and a trustworthy resource. My guess is that if you had come to coffee with Colleen and me on that day some years ago, you would have shared our excitement to see women growing in their love of the Scriptures and of the God they proclaim. What we want for you is to be able to serve your local church, whether in a classroom or a living room, with good tools and the confidence to use them. My prayer is that you would take what Colleen has created and combine it with an invitation to the women God has placed in your sphere of influence—a simple invitation: Meet me in the Bible! No sweeter fellowship is found than in that meeting place. May your time spent there yield the richest of treasures.

JEN WILKIN

Bible teacher; author, *Women of the Word*;
None Like Him; and *In His Image*

MEET ME IN THE BIBLE

A Simple Framework for Reading the Bible and Enjoying God

God delights in revealing himself, and one of the primary ways he reveals himself is through the Bible. My deep desire is for people to know and enjoy God through the study of his word. I want people with all kinds of personalities and learning styles to grow in confidence that they can read and study their Bibles. This framework of Bible study was designed to provide helpful structure and a lot of freedom for the studier.

The *Why* behind Meet Me in the Bible

Meet Me in the Bible is a simple, five-step framework designed to help you read your Bible. It is not a fill-in-the-blank study. After numerous conversations with women over many years of ministry, I've found that countless women do Bible studies, yet few feel confident opening the Bible and reading it on their own. And although many women desire to lead a Bible study, few feel equipped to do so. Meet Me in the Bible offers a method to help you do both.

How to Use Meet Me in the Bible

This framework was designed for either individual or group Bible study, and it incorporates the time-tested stages of Bible reading: observation, interpretation, and application. Prompts are provided on your bookmark to help you observe, interpret, and apply the Scriptures. You will also be prompted to use simple and accessible tools as you study. You will grow in confidence and find your pace as you practice observing, interpreting, and applying the Scriptures again and again. You can use this framework to study any book of the Bible.

For Group Study

If you are doing this study as part of a group, you will want to complete each lesson before you meet. Each lesson is divided into five doable steps rather

than five assigned days, to allow flexibility. You can work through one step each day or the whole lesson in one sitting. Find the pace that works best for you. No matter how much of the lesson you are able to complete, please don't skip gathering with your Bible study group. You will benefit from your group, and your group will be encouraged by your presence.

Meet Me in the Bible studies are meant to be flexible. Group studies can opt to meet in small groups for discussion and a time of teaching or simply meet for discussion only.

TIPS FOR GROUPS THAT OPT TO MEET FOR BOTH A TIME OF DISCUSSION AND A TIME OF TEACHING

- If this is your group's first Meet Me in the Bible study, be sure each participant is familiar with how to use the Meet Me in the Bible framework before you meet. You can find my videos on how to use the Meet Me in the Bible framework at colleensearcy.com/mmibteaching. In these videos, I demonstrate how to cross-reference, quickly check other translations, and more, using simple and free digital tools.
- For the first meeting, teachers will want to cover the Getting Started section before discussion. One of the greatest Bible study tools available is the historical context of the Bible book you are studying. To have the best chance of interpreting the Scriptures correctly, you need to know who the author was, whom he was writing to, the literary style he used, and what was happening in the world when he wrote it. I cover the answers to these questions in my "Getting Started" video, which you will find at colleensearcy.com/mmibteaching.
- After answering those preliminary questions, move to small-group discussion. Spend time getting to know one another. You can use the Getting Started questions in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit.
- For all future meetings, you can gather for discussion before or after the teaching. I suggest that you gather *before* the teaching. You will

be amazed at the insights gained as each participant shares what was discovered during personal study. Confidence will grow as you learn from one another's discoveries. Tips for discussion:

- The prompts on your bookmark make good points of discussion. (What did you learn from the repeated words? What was hard to understand? What did you learn about people?)
- Content-specific discussion questions for each lesson can be found in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit.
- Additional historical context is given in the questions in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit.
- The bounce questions in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit are intended to jumpstart discussion and provide an easy transition to the content.
- Discussion leaders may use as many or as few discussion questions from Tool 7 as they'd like. These questions were written to help you think deeply about the text. Many of the questions do not have one right answer and are meant to encourage further thought and robust discussion. Questions with one correct answer (e.g., What did Paul say about sin in verse 12?) can feel like a quiz rather than an invitation into conversation.
- Discussion leaders *do* want to plan which questions they will cover and think through their own answers before the group meets. They *do not* need to feel pressure to answer every question that surfaces during Bible study. The purpose of Bible study is not to impress with our knowledge; it is to grow in our knowledge of and love for God as we get to know him better through the study of his word. Enjoy being a colearner with those you are studying alongside. If the questions that surface are not answered in the teaching time, you can circle back with your group after you've had time to think further about them.

- Use the prayer pages in Tool 6 of the Tool Kit to record personal prayer requests and the prayers of those you are studying alongside.

TIPS FOR GROUPS THAT OPT TO MEET FOR DISCUSSION ONLY

- If this is your group's first Meet Me in the Bible study, be sure each participant watches my videos on how to use the Meet Me in the Bible framework before you meet. You can find them at colleensearcy.com/mmibteaching. In these videos, I demonstrate how to cross-reference, quickly check other translations, and more, using simple and free digital tools.
- For the first meeting, be prepared to discuss the Getting Started section. One of the greatest Bible study tools available is the historical context of the Bible book you are studying. To have the best chance of interpreting the Scriptures correctly, you need to know who the author was, whom he was writing to, the literary style he used, and what was happening in the world when he wrote it. I answer these questions in my "Getting Started" video at colleensearcy.com/mmibteaching.
- Spend time getting to know one another. You can use the Getting Started questions in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit.
- For all future meetings:
 - The prompts on your bookmark make good points of discussion: What did you learn from the repeated words? What was hard to understand? What did you learn about people?
 - Content-specific discussion questions for each lesson can be found in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit.
 - The bounce questions in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit are intended to jumpstart discussion and provide an easy transition to the content.

- Additional historical context is given in the questions found in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit.
- Discussion leaders may use as many or as few discussion questions from Tool 7 as they'd like. These questions were written to help you think deeply about the text. Many of the questions do not have one right answer and are meant to encourage further thought and robust discussion. Questions with one correct answer (e.g., What did Paul say about sin in verse 12?) can feel like a quiz rather than an invitation into conversation.
- Discussion leaders *do* want to plan on which questions they will cover and think through their own answers before the group meets. They *do not* need to feel pressure to answer every question that surfaces during Bible study. The purpose of Bible study is not to impress with our knowledge; it is to grow in our knowledge of and love for God as we get to know him better through the study of his word. When stumped by a question, you can say something like, “That is a great question! I’d like to give that more thought and circle back next time we meet.” Then have fun studying! Enjoy being a colearner with those you are studying alongside. Ask God to help you with the questions that surface. He is delighted to meet you in the Bible. What a great discussion you will have the next time you meet!
- Use the prayer pages in Tool 6 of the Tool Kit to record personal prayer requests and the prayers of those you are studying alongside.

For Individual Study

- If you are doing this study on your own, you will want to begin by watching my videos on how to use the Meet Me in the Bible framework. You can find them at colleensearcy.com/mmibteaching. In these videos, I demonstrate how to cross-reference, quickly check other translations, and more, using simple and free digital tools.

- Be sure to complete the Getting Started section before diving in to study the passages of Scripture. One of the greatest Bible study tools available is the historical context of the Bible book you are studying. When you study a passage that is hard to understand, overlay the passage with the context. To have the best chance of interpreting the Scriptures correctly, we need to know who the author was, whom he was writing to, the literary style he used, and what was happening in the world when he wrote it. I answer these questions in my “Getting Started” video at colleensearcy.com/mmibteaching.
- After completing the Getting Started section, each lesson is divided into five doable steps rather than five assigned days, to allow flexibility. You can work through one step each day or work through the whole lesson in one sitting. Find the pace that works best for you.
- For a deeper dive, use the questions in Tool 7 of the Tool Kit. Additional historical context is also given within the questions. These questions were written to help you think deeply about the text.
- Use the prayer pages in Tool 6 of the Tool Kit to record your prayers while you study.

What’s Included in This Study

Bible Study Bookmark

All Meet Me in the Bible studies include a bookmark with the time-tested stages of Bible reading (Observe, Interpret, and Apply) on the front. You will see the five-step framework for reading the Bible on the back of the bookmark, including prompts to help you observe, interpret, and apply the Scriptures. You will also be prompted to pause in your study to listen to and enjoy God. He wants to meet you in your study of the Bible! Although the Bible study bookmark and the Bible study book were designed to work together, your bookmark can also be used alone. It was designed to help you study any book of the Bible, and my hope is that you will use your bookmark again and again.

Bible Study Book

The book includes word-for-word Bible text. Mark it up! If you love highlighters, highlight away! If you prefer to draw symbols, grab colored pencils and go for it. Or simply underline with your favorite pen. Your Bible study book also includes titles and designated spaces that correspond with the titles and prompts on your bookmark. Additionally, you will find blank note pages throughout your book to use as you wish. Draw a chart, sketch an image, or write the lyrics to a song. Each lesson concludes with an important wrap-up question to prompt you to consider what you discovered in the Scriptures.

Meet Me in the Bible Tool Kit

Tool 1: *Bible Timeline*. Understanding historical context is key to reading and interpreting the Scriptures. Place an *X* on the simple timeline of the Bible to indicate where the scriptures you are studying land in the whole story of the Bible.

Tool 2: *Map*. Referencing a map while studying is a helpful reminder that these are stories of real people in real places.

Tool 3: *Bible Genres*. Knowing the literary style of the book of the Bible you are studying is key to correct interpretation. Just as you would approach the poems of Wordsworth differently than you would approach a history book about World War II, there are nuances to different literary styles in the Bible that must be kept in mind while interpreting and applying the Scriptures. Use this resource to identify the literary style of the book you are studying.

Tool 4: *Attributes of God*. You will be prompted to use this tool each week. You may want to mark it with a paper clip so you can turn there easily. The ultimate goal of Bible study is to know and love God, and my prayer is that your hope will be further anchored in him as you are reminded of his attributes.

Tool 5: *Bookmark Content*. All the information on your bookmark is included here for your convenience.

Tool 6: *Prayer Pages*. Use these pages to record personal prayers and prayer requests of those studying alongside you.

Tool 7: *Questions for Further Thought and Discussion*. Use as many or as few of these questions as you'd like in your individual or group study. Additional historical context is included in the questions. The bounce questions are intended to jumpstart discussion and provide an easy transition to the content. The remaining questions were written to help you think deeply about the text.

Additional Tools for Your Study

1. *Different Bible translations*. Reading Scripture verses in different Bible translations can give helpful insight as you study. This book includes the ESV translation. Other translations I recommend are the New International Version (NIV), the New Living Translation (NLT), the Christian Standard Bible (CSB), and the New American Standard Bible (NASB). I use *The Message* as a commentary when I study.
2. *Dictionary and thesaurus*. Look up unfamiliar words as well as “church” words such as *atonement*, *propitiation*, and *covenant*. You will be surprised how much clarity can be gained by reading simple definitions and synonyms in a dictionary or thesaurus.¹
3. *Cross-references*. Cross-references are included in study Bibles, usually in the middle or at the bottom of a page. A cross-reference is a marker in the Bible pointing to other passages of Scripture with related words and themes. It is usually designated with a superscript (tiny, raised) letter. Cross-referencing is a way to use Scripture to rightly interpret Scripture. You can also use digital tools to cross-reference.²
4. *Study Bible footnotes*. If you have a study Bible, the provided footnotes give helpful insights.³ Wait to check footnotes until after you've observed the text and attempted interpretation using other translations, a dictionary, and cross-references, and overlaying the passage with the context. Resist the temptation to jump to someone else's thoughts before observing and interpreting on your own. Enjoy being curious and see what you discover!

5. *Commentaries.* Commentaries can be helpful in Bible study, but wait to use commentaries until after you've observed the text and attempted interpretation using other translations, a dictionary, and cross-references, and overlaying the passage with the context. Ask God for insight as you study, and be willing to wait to hear from him. Again, resist the temptation to jump to someone else's thoughts before observing and interpreting on your own. For help choosing commentaries, begin by asking trusted leaders about their favorites.⁴

The ultimate goal of Bible study is to know and love God. So observe, interpret, apply, and enjoy God! Stay in conversation with him, asking him to help you understand the Scriptures. Ask him your hard questions. Listen to him. He wants to meet you in your study of the Bible!

WHY STUDY THE STORY OF JACOB?

We worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Knowing the stories of our patriarchs and God's covenant with them helps us understand the rest of the Bible.

Jacob is a key figure in the Bible. He is mentioned in the Scriptures over three hundred times, over twenty times in the New Testament alone. Jacob's name was changed by God to Israel, and his sons gave rise to the twelve tribes of Israel. The people of Israel laid claim to the promised land based on the covenant God made with Abraham, then with Isaac and later Jacob. It was Jacob's family of seventy who journeyed to Egypt because of the famine in Canaan. It was his family who multiplied in the land of Egypt for over four hundred years, becoming so great in number that Pharaoh was afraid of them. And it was the descendants of Jacob who exited Egypt by the thousands under the leadership of Moses.

Jacob's family relationships were difficult throughout his whole life. His father-in-law deceived him and cheated him multiple times. His parents, Isaac and Rebekah, showed overt favoritism, causing tension and conflict between Jacob and his older twin brother, Esau. Jacob did not break the pattern, showing overt favoritism for one wife and one son, causing monumental tension and conflict for his entire family.

Jacob rightly represents God's people who waver between trusting God and trusting in something else. Jacob often failed to trust God's covenant and timing. He spent much of his life in conflict due to his own schemes. Although Jacob vacillated between trusting God and trusting in his own plans, God did not waver in his faithfulness to Jacob. Interestingly, authors of the Old Testament referred to this patriarch as both Israel and Jacob, often within the same verse.

The story of Jacob offers timely reminders about how to live as the people of God, trusting God's timing and faithfulness. God will always do what he

says he will do. Always. Our hasty plans, deceptions, and utter failures will make life harder, but they cannot thwart the plans or inhibit the love and faithfulness of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Joyfully,
COLLEEN SEARCY

GETTING STARTED IN THE STORY OF JACOB

We have our best chance of understanding the story of Jacob if we overlay the text in Genesis with important context. Below are context questions to address before you begin the study.⁵ For help answering these questions, you can watch my Getting Started video at colleensearcy.com/mmibteaching.

1. Who wrote the story of Jacob, recorded in the book of Genesis?

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2. When was the book of Genesis written?

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3. To whom was it written and for what purpose?

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4. In what style was the book of Genesis written? Turn to Tool 3 in the Tool Kit for help identifying the genre.⁶

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5. What are the central themes of the book of Genesis?

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6. Turn to Tool 1 in the Tool Kit. Place an *X* on the timeline to determine where the story of Jacob lands in the whole story of the Bible.

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1

JACOB WRESTLES WITH ESAU

Genesis 25:19-26:35

JACOB WRESTLES WITH ESAU

Genesis 25:19–26:35

¹⁹ These are the generations of Isaac, Abraham’s son: Abraham fathered Isaac, ²⁰ and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife. ²¹ And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren. And the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebekah his wife conceived. ²² The children struggled together within her, and she said, “If it is thus, why is this happening to me?” So she went to inquire of the LORD. ²³ And the LORD said to her,

“Two nations are in your womb,
and two peoples from within you shall be divided;
the one shall be stronger than the other,
the older shall serve the younger.”

²⁴ When her days to give birth were completed, behold, there were twins in her womb. ²⁵ The first came out red, all his body like a hairy cloak, so they called his name Esau. ²⁶ Afterward his brother came out with his hand holding Esau’s heel, so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

²⁷ When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. ²⁸ Isaac loved Esau because he ate of his game, but Rebekah loved Jacob.

²⁹ Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted. ³⁰ And Esau said to Jacob, “Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!” (Therefore his name was called Edom.) ³¹ Jacob said, “Sell me your birthright now.” ³² Esau said, “I am about to die; of what use

is a birthright to me?”³³ Jacob said, “Swear to me now.” So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob.³⁴ Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

^{26:1} Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that was in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar to Abimelech king of the Philistines.² And the LORD appeared to him and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you.³ Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you, for to you and to your offspring I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath that I swore to Abraham your father.⁴ I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and will give to your offspring all these lands. And in your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed,⁵ because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.”

⁶ So Isaac settled in Gerar.⁷ When the men of the place asked him about his wife, he said, “She is my sister,” for he feared to say, “My wife,” thinking, “lest the men of the place should kill me because of Rebekah,” because she was attractive in appearance.⁸ When he had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked out of a window and saw Isaac laughing with Rebekah his wife.⁹ So Abimelech called Isaac and said, “Behold, she is your wife. How then could you say, ‘She is my sister’?” Isaac said to him, “Because I thought, ‘Lest I die because of her.’”¹⁰ Abimelech said, “What is this you have done to us? One of the people might easily have lain with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us.”¹¹ So Abimelech warned all the people, saying, “Whoever touches this man or his wife shall surely be put to death.”

¹² And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The LORD blessed him,¹³ and the man became rich, and gained more and more until he became very wealthy.¹⁴ He had possessions of flocks and herds and many servants, so that the Philistines envied him.¹⁵ (Now the Philistines

had stopped and filled with earth all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Abraham his father.)¹⁶ And Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us, for you are much mightier than we."

¹⁷ So Isaac departed from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar and settled there.¹⁸ And Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of Abraham his father, which the Philistines had stopped after the death of Abraham. And he gave them the names that his father had given them.¹⁹ But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a well of spring water,²⁰ the herdsmen of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herdsmen, saying, "The water is ours." So he called the name of the well Esek, because they contended with him.²¹ Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that also, so he called its name Sitnah.²² And he moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it. So he called its name Rehoboth, saying, "For now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

²³ From there he went up to Beersheba.²⁴ And the LORD appeared to him the same night and said, "I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you and will bless you and multiply your offspring for my servant Abraham's sake."²⁵ So he built an altar there and called upon the name of the LORD and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well.

²⁶ When Abimelech went to him from Gerar with Ahuzzath his adviser and Phicol the commander of his army,²⁷ Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, seeing that you hate me and have sent me away from you?"²⁸ They said, "We see plainly that the LORD has been with you. So we said, let there be a sworn pact between us, between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you,²⁹ that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD."³⁰ So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank.³¹ In the morning they rose early and exchanged oaths.

And Isaac sent them on their way, and they departed from him in peace.
³²That same day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well that they had dug and said to him, "We have found water." ³³He called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beersheba to this day.

³⁴When Esau was forty years old, he took Judith the daughter of Beerli the Hittite to be his wife, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite, ³⁵and they made life bitter for Isaac and Rebekah.

OBSERVE: WHAT DOES THE PASSAGE SAY?

Step 1: Setting and Summary

Key Characters and Locations

CHARACTERS:

- *Isaac*. Son of Abraham and Sarah; husband of Rebekah; father of Esau and Jacob.
- *Rebekah*. Wife of Isaac; sister of Laban. She was barren but conceived twin boys because the Lord granted Isaac's prayer for her.
- *Esau*. Firstborn of Isaac and Rebekah and Jacob's twin.
- *Jacob*. Younger son of Isaac and Rebekah and Esau's twin.
- *Abimelech*. King of the Philistines; possibly same man in Genesis 20 with Abraham (and same deception!) or perhaps his descendant.

LOCATIONS:

See if you can find these locations on the map in Tool 2 of the Tool Kit.

- *Gerar*. Inhabited by Philistines; where Isaac sojourned during the famine in Canaan. In contrast to his father, Abraham, Isaac listened to the Lord and did not go to Egypt.
- *Beersheba*. Where Isaac moved after Gerar. God appeared to Isaac in Beersheba and promised to be with him, bless him, and multiply his offspring; restating the covenant given to his father, Abraham.

Summary of the Passage

What Stood Out to You or Piqued Your Curiosity?

Step 2: Key Words and Phrases

Remember to look at the prompts on your Bible study bookmark as you observe the text.

- *Twos*: two nations in Rebekah's womb; "two peoples from within you"; twins (Isaac loved one, Rebekah loved the other).
- *Birthright*: 4 times!
- "*And the LORD appeared*": 2 times!
- *Wells*. Wells are mentioned a lot.

Remember to enjoy God and listen as you study. Move to a time of prayer after you observe, recording your prayer on the prayer pages in Tool 6.

INTERPRET: WHAT DOES THE PASSAGE MEAN?

Step 3: What Was Hard to Understand?

Questions

- *What does it mean that Esau despised his birthright?*
- *Why did God bless Isaac after he handed over Rebekah to Abimelech?*
- *Why are the wells mentioned so many times? What is the significance?*

Insights from Cross-References, Other Translations, and the Context

Remember that historical context is one of the greatest Bible study tools available. Keep asking the questions: Who wrote this? When did he write it? Where does this land in the whole story of the Bible? How would these words land on the ears of the original hearers?

- *What does it mean that Esau despised his birthright?* Genesis 25:32 in the New Living Translation reads: “Look, I’m dying of starvation!” said Esau. And, “What good is my birthright to me now?” In the cross-reference Hebrews 12:16, we read that Esau was unholy for selling his birthright for a meal—a temporary craving. He treated the covenant blessing linked to firstborn status as trivial.
- *Why did God bless Isaac after he handed over Rebekah to Abimelech?* Hint: Look back at the context on page 13 to gain insight. Who wrote the book of Genesis? To whom was he writing? Where had they just come from? How might both the stories of Abraham in Gerar (Genesis 20) and Isaac in Gerar strengthen the faith of the original hearers? Also, remember that authors of historical narrative recorded what actually happened, not what should have happened.
- *Why are the wells mentioned so many times? What is the significance?* Hint: Think back to the context. Who were the original hearers? How might they be encouraged by the story of Isaac redigging the wells of Abraham in the land of Canaan?

Remember to turn to the Questions for Further Thought and Discussion in Tool 7 for a deeper dive. Additional historical context is also given within the questions.

Step 4: What Did You Learn about God?

Refer to the attributes of God in Tool 4 if needed.

Remember to enjoy God and listen as you study. Move to a time of prayer after you interpret, recording your prayer on the prayer pages in Tool 6.

APPLY: HOW WILL YOU APPLY THE PASSAGE?

Step 5: What Did You Learn about People?

Others

Remember to look at the prompts on your Bible study bookmark as you apply the text.

Yourself

- *Is there a command to obey? An example to follow? A sin to confess? A warning to heed? An encouragement to receive?*
- *What action step will you take?*

Wrap Up: What Did You Discover in the Scriptures That Was Important to You?

Remember to enjoy God and listen as you study. Move to a time of prayer after you apply, recording your prayer on the prayer pages in Tool 6.

